



**Opening Statement of Rep. Aaron Bean (R-FL), Chairman
Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education
Hearing: “School Choice: Expanding Educational Freedom for All”
April 18, 2023**

(As prepared for delivery)

Education freedom is on the rise.

Why is school choice spreading like wildfire? Simply put, parents are demanding it. They want the ability to choose where their children go to school and provide them with the best education possible. The traditional public school system has failed many families, particularly those in lower-income communities. School choice programs offer a way out of failing schools and provide access to high-quality education options that would otherwise be unavailable.

Specifically, the COVID-19 pandemic showed the shortcomings of our public school system and the need for education reform. School closures left children trapped in unresponsive, rigid systems and created generational learning loss. In my state of Florida, we kept school doors open in 2020 despite massive opposition, and Florida students are better for it. By keeping our students in school, we avoided the catastrophic achievement gap that we are seeing in states across the nation. According to *The New York Times*, nine-year-olds were set back two decades in math and reading¹. Studies further found that students in remote school districts did markedly worse than those in schools that re-opened².

To parents, the failure of remote learning was obvious and predictable. They didn't need *The New York Times* to confirm what they already knew. Now they want options to stop this from happening again. Moreover, their children need recovery.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/28/briefing/pandemic-learning-loss.html>

² https://glenn.osu.edu/sites/default/files/2021-10/210828_KL_OST_Final_0.pdf

School choice provides the best possible solution on both fronts. It gives parents the option to choose a traditional public, private, charter, magnet, or home school for their child. It allows parents to take an active role in their child's education and gives them the flexibility that they need to ensure their child's success. We need look no further than Florida—an early pioneer of education freedom—to see how universal school choice successfully gives parents a greater role in their child's education and ensures every student has access to quality education.

School choice also creates competition, which will drive up the quality of education across the board. Again and again, studies have shown that school choice is a boon for academic outcomes and graduation rates. Virtually no evidence supports the contrary. To the dismay of Democrats and teachers unions, more options even improve outcomes in PUBLIC schools.

Furthermore, one of the few silver linings of the pandemic is that it brought the classroom to the kitchen table. Parents who had been left in the dark by the public-school bureaucracy became first-hand witnesses to the divisive curricula being taught in some traditional public schools. Story after story has revealed that some schools are teaching unconscionable, radical race and gender ideology. School choice empowers parents to enroll their children in a system that aligns with their values and beliefs.

Some will say that school choice is a threat to our public schools. But that's simply not true. School choice is about creating opportunities for all students, regardless of their background or income. It's about empowering parents to make the best decisions for their children and giving them the freedom to choose a school that meets their individual needs.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting school choice. Let's give parents and students the power to choose the education that works best for them. Let's empower our children to reach their full potential and build a brighter future for our nation.

With that, I look forward to the hearing today and yield to the ranking member.